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23 November 1971

HIGHLIGHTS OF NIE 11-8-71 (NOVEMBER 1971)

COMPARED WITH NIE 11-8-70 (NOVEMBER 1970)

This year's Estimate is very similar to last year's with respect to Soviet policy and goals vis-a-vis its strategic relationship with the U.S. The considerable potential impact of SALT on the extent and composition of strategic forces is acknowledged, but the Estimate continues to deal mainly with a consideration of the situation in the absence of an agreement.

The principal differences between the two Estimates are in details of force composition and projected dates of possible new developments. The major points of difference include:

A. Construction of new types of ICBM silos and the likely prospect that new types of ICBM's will be flight tested over the next two years.

C. Closer agreement within the intelligence community on the capability of the SS-9 with its heavy RV to reach Minuteman fields.

D. An apparent loss of Soviet interest in land-mobile ICBM's.

E. An increased Y-class submarine production rate to about nine per year.

F. There still is disagreement about Soviet intent to use the Backfire bomber in an intercontinental role, but all agree that the first units could be deployed by late 1973.

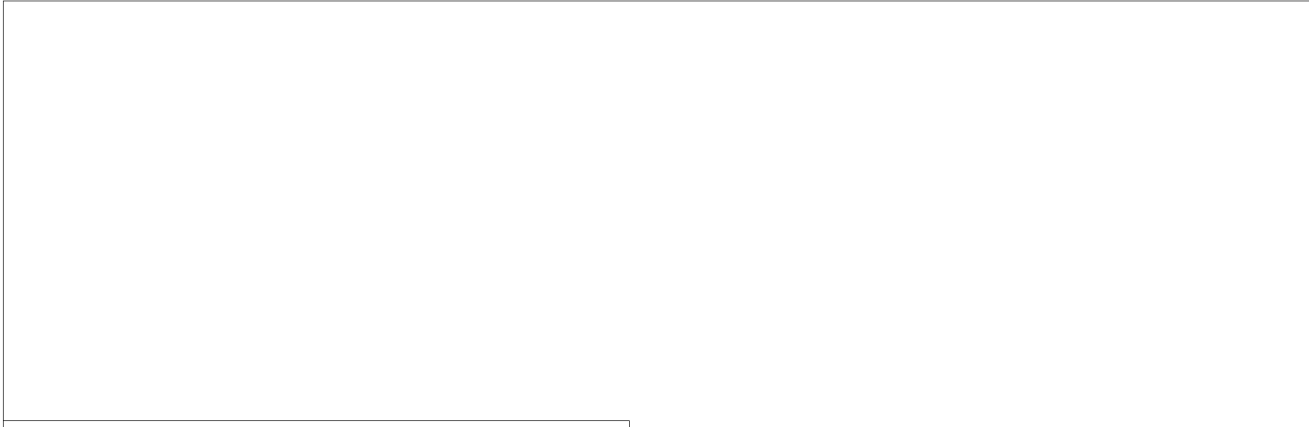
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The ultimate extent of the deployment is still uncertain, and could depend in a major way on the outcome of SALT.

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Last year there was no evidence of a new small ICBM, 



There also is substantial new evidence--though less conclusive-- that another new development program is under way at 

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If a new program is planned, it could be a new liquid propellant ICBM or some modification to the SS-11. A new missile probably would require about two years of flight testing, while a new version of the SS-11 probably could be developed somewhat sooner.

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The status of Soviet MIRV development is less certain than before, and the earliest date for hard-target MIRV deployment is judged to be at least a year later than previously estimated. Last year's Estimate

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stated that

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[redacted] It judged, however, that the Soviets could not have a MIRV for use against hard targets before late 1972. This year there are differing views within the intelligence community about the SS-9 MOD 4. They are:

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[redacted]

In any case, all agree that a MIRV for use against hard targets could not be operational before late 1973 even if testing begins soon.

The extent of the SS-9's capability to reach U.S. Minuteman sites with its heavy RV has been a point of debate for some time. Last

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year [redacted] took the position that the maximum

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[redacted] 25X1
[redacted] 25X1
DIA and Air Force believed that the maximum [redacted] 25X1

and that the system could reach all Minuteman locations from at least

25X1 SS-9 complexes. This year all agree that the [redacted] 25X1

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[redacted]
[redacted] additionally believes that a [redacted] cannot be 25X1

ruled out by the evidence and should be considered a possibility

because that would [redacted] 25X1

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[redacted]
Soviet development of penetration aids is expected to continue.

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[redacted]
Soviet development of land-mobile ICBM's is considered less likely than it was a year ago. The one program which appeared to have a potential mobile ICBM application--the SS-X-15--has probably been cancelled; and there [redacted] 25X1

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[redacted] The current Estimate judges that, on balance, the record suggests that the Soviets have lost interest in land-mobile ICBM systems, at least for the present.

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In the area of SLBM's, the current Estimate points out that the Y-class submarine production rate has increased from an average of seven to eight per year to an average of about nine per year. It also points out that there is uncertainty now associated with G-class submarine conversions and that Soviet plans for deploying the SS-NX-8 are in greater doubt than they were a year ago. If the SS-NX-8 is intended for a new submarine, deployment probably would not occur until about 1975, even though the missile probably could be ready for deployment by late 1972. There still is no direct evidence of a new ballistic missile submarine program, [REDACTED] 25X1

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[REDACTED]

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Data collected over the past year have strengthened the view held [REDACTED] that the Backfire is best suited for peripheral operations, although it may have some capability for intercontinental attack. The [REDACTED] regards this evidence 25X1 inconclusive and believes that the capabilities of the Backfire indicate a Soviet intent to employ the aircraft in both intercontinental and peripheral operations.

The Soviets have progressed in the Backfire bomber test program to a point where it is now estimated that the first units could be operational by late 1973 if equipped with existing weapons. Last year it was estimated that the Backfire could begin to enter operational units in 1975.

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The tables of illustrative future force model projections in last year's Estimate represented possible directions that Soviet intercontinental attack forces could take in the absence of an arms control agreement, although some possible effects of an agreement were discussed in the text. This year two illustrative forces are presented representing (a) a likely and (b) a maximum Soviet effort within a SALT agreement containing provisions similar to the U.S. 27 July 1971 proposal except that 1 October 1971 is used as the freeze date for the start of new ICBM and SLBM launchers.

The more likely SALT-limited force model assumes that the primary Soviet objective would be to maintain a strong retaliatory capability throughout the decade against U.S. programmed forces. The maximum effort model is designed to improve counterforce as well as retaliatory capabilities. It postulates rapid technological progress for all systems and differs from the more likely force primarily in the rate and extent of the deployment of accurate MIRV's.

Several other illustrative force models are presented to depict possible Soviet courses of action without an arms control agreement. These models include likely future forces as well as the highly unlikely extremes, ranging from essentially a stop-where-they-are posture to an all out attempt to obtain early acquisition of a capability to knock out virtually all of the U.S. ICBM force. The attached table is useful in comparing the various force models to understand the range of possibilities and their relative magnitudes.

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